

June 15, 2020

Dr. Grant Colfax, Director  
San Francisco Department of Public Health

Mr. Phil Ginsburg, General Manager  
San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department

Ms. Dana Ketcham, Director  
Property Management, Permits and Reservations



**Re: Opening S.F.'s Public Tennis Courts to Doubles**

Dear Dr. Colfax, Mr. Ginsburg and Ms. Ketcham,

The Tennis Coalition of San Francisco represents the thousands of people in our City who enjoy playing tennis on San Francisco's 150 public courts. On behalf of the tennis playing public, we thank you for re-opening the public courts for tennis singles and for the wise protocols and reservations system you have instituted to facilitate safe play. Here we are, only a week in, and reports of joy and relief are zipping back and forth across social media, balls are zipping back and forth across the nets.

We write to encourage the City and County of San Francisco to expand the opportunities for play to **include doubles as soon as possible**. Among recreational players in the U.S., 80% prefer to play doubles. So long as play is limited to singles, the majority of players who could benefit from one of the safest options for fresh air and vigorous exercise available during the COVID pandemic won't have that chance.

We believe that health officials here and elsewhere across the U.S. took appropriate caution and followed the USTA's initial guidelines for safe play, which favored singles. But, with evolving evidence and experience, the USTA has now stated that doubles can also be played safely. They draw no distinction between singles and doubles, save the importance of following protocols for each style of play. Revised USTA guidelines now state: "When playing doubles, coordinate with your partner to maintain physical distancing."

Put more colloquially, Northern California's *Inside Tennis* recently interviewed the CEO of USTA, Michael Dowse. "Dowse added that the USTA has revised its safe play guidelines relating to a key aspect of the game – doubles. 'Essentially, if you plan to play doubles, practice social distancing. We've gotten away from any language implying you should not play doubles.'"

Moreover, in addition to the best opinions of the professional tennis associations, independent public health experts in Michigan examined 36 different activities for levels of risk and concluded that among all of them, tennis was the least risky, ranking it last. And, these experts' evaluation made **no distinction between doubles and singles**.

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“Risk level: 1 (10 being the riskiest)

**There’s also little concern with playing tennis**, the experts said. Spacing is part of the game, it’s typically outdoors and there’s **only two to four people on a court**. (Emphasis added.) While some sports activities cause concern for the health experts, tennis is not one of them.”

So, where are we?

We concur with and appreciate the decision to begin with singles. This past week, the S.F. tennis community quickly adapted and is now familiar with social distancing behavior on court, separate balls, sanitization, no lingering. We’re ready for doubles.

We are passionate about playing this sport – among the safest, healthiest exercise options possible in the midst of this pandemic – and ask that the Department of Public Health and the Recreation and Parks Department collaborate and bring back doubles to our public courts very quickly.

With much appreciation for all that you are doing to keep us healthy and safe,

*Lois Salisbury*

Lois Salisbury, Co-Chair

*Martha Ehrenfeld*

Martha Ehrenfeld, Co-Chair

*Julie Exley*

Julie Exley, Executive Director

cc. San Francisco Board of Supervisors  
San Francisco Recreation and Park Commissioners  
San Francisco Parks Alliance  
Tennis Coalition Board Members + Staff

<https://www.usta.com/en/home/stay-current/national/usta-statement-on-safety-of-playing-tennis-during-the-covid-19-v.html>

<http://www.insidetennis.com/2020/06/exclusive-usta-ceo-dowse-on-groups-day-of-reckoning/>

Michigan Article ranking safety of activities by four public health officials:

<https://www.mlive.com/public-interest/2020/06/from-hair-salons-to-gyms-experts-rank-36-activities-by-coronavirus-risk-level.html>

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